

Moments in History

Commemorating Women's Role in Canadian History



Ontario
Women's
Directorate

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December 6: A Provincial and National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Fourteen women were murdered at L'École Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989. This day will forever be remembered in Canada and has become both a national and provincial day of remembrance of this tragedy. Canadians will never forget the hope and potential of those young women — and how it was destroyed at the hands of a violent man.

December 6 is also a day for remembering the thousands of other Canadian women who have been, and continue to be, physically and emotionally abused, sexually assaulted and murdered — in their homes, in schoolyards and on campuses, and at workplaces — every day of every year.

The Need for Action

December 6 is not only a day of remembrance, but a day which emphasizes the need for action; the need to do, to inform, to involve; the need to see December 6 not simply as a day for wearing symbols, but also as a day for taking concrete steps.

In 1991:

- 121 Canadian women were killed by a current or estranged intimate male partner;
- 49 of these women lived in Ontario.**

** Statistics Canada, Juristat, Service Bulletin, October 1992.

At the same time that we mourn, we have to work harder than ever for changes. And women shouldn't be expected to continue fighting against violence alone.

Each one of us has a role to play in helping women gain more control over their lives — so that they are not victimized by husbands, boyfriends, co-workers, landlords and neighbours:

- **Parents and teachers** can work to counter violence against women by helping children to develop without the old stereotypes of passive girls and aggressive boys.
- **Health and social service workers** can treat physically and sexually assaulted women with sensitivity — and help them get appropriate support and counselling if they need it.
- **Law enforcers** — including judges — can deal seriously and respectfully with women who report crimes of violence.
- **Employers** can make it clear to their workers that sexual harassment will not be allowed to poison the atmosphere of workplaces, and prevent women's advancement. Unions can send the same message to their members.
- **Men** who are sincere in wearing white ribbons on December 6, will do so not merely to symbolize their disgust with violence against women, but to stimulate dis-

In Memory



Geneviève Bergeron
Hélène Colgan
Nathalie Croteau
Barbara Daigneault
Anne-Marie Edward
Maud Haviernick
Barbara Maria Klueznick
Maryse Laganière
Maryse Leclair
Anne-Marie Lemay
Sonia Pelletier
Michèle Richard
Annie St-Arneault
Annie Turcotte

cussion and take responsibility as well. They can contribute to stopping violence against women by talking to their sons, brothers, fathers and friends; by confronting traditional attitudes; and by challenging other men to change those attitudes.

First Mourn. Then Work for Change.

In short, individuals can act as well as remember. Many of us have been moved by Joss MacLennan's commemorative poster which reads: "First mourn. Then work for change." More and more people — men and women — are realizing that they don't want our society undermined by violence against women. They want a fair society — one in which women and men are equals — where the threat of violence doesn't restrict where women can go, when they can go there, how they can speak and to whom.

